



College Station Fire Department

5 YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

I. Department Overview

The Fire Department has adopted a mission statement that reads:

The College Station Fire Department will strive to provide cost effective, high quality Fire Suppression and Emergency Medical Services while providing non-emergency Fire Prevention, Code Enforcement, Public Education and Support Services to the community.

The Fire Department comprises one hundred-twelve¹ full-time equivalent employees in four divisions: Fire Administration; Emergency Operations; the Office of the Fire Marshal; and the Division of Emergency Management. The principal function of the Fire Department is to provide to the citizens of our community traditional fire department services, such as fire suppression and emergency medical service, fire prevention and public safety education, mitigation of incidents involving hazardous materials and weapons of mass destruction, and city-wide emergency management coordination. Other “non-traditional” services are also administered by the fire department, including supervision of parking operations, enforcement of parking ordinances and regulations, and enforcement of city premise codes and ordinances.

Fire Administration is made up of five personnel. These are the Fire Chief, the Research and Planning Coordinator (who also serves as the department Public Information Officer), the Emergency Management Coordinator, a Staff Assistant, and a Secretary. The Assistant Fire Chief and the Fire Marshal also report directly to the Fire Chief.

The Emergency Operations Division is under the supervision of the Assistant Fire Chief and is made up of a Training Officer and the following shift personnel:

Battalion Chief- 3 Lieutenant- 12 Driver/Engineer- 15 Firefighter- 57

These 87 personnel work a twenty-four hour on/forty-eight hour off schedule and are divided into three shifts of 29 personnel each. Each shift currently covers four fire stations, staffing three engines, one quint, three ambulances, one aircraft rescue and firefighting vehicle, and one command vehicle at all times.

¹ This figure includes positions approved for FY '03.

The Fire Marshal is responsible for supervising all operations involving Fire Prevention Inspections and Fire Origin and Cause Investigation, Public Education, Parking Operations and Enforcement, and Community Enhancement/Code Enforcement.

Personnel under the Fire Marshal's Office are: three Fire Prevention Officers, one Public Education Officer, four Code Enforcement Officers, one Parking Supervisor, four full-time Parking Officers, and four full-time equivalent Parking Officers.

II. Community Assumption/Vision/Strategic Plan

The Office of Budget and Strategic Planning anticipates that the City of College Station's population will continue to expand at an annual increase of two and one half percent. This is based on the assumption that Texas A&M and Blinn College will continue to drive the local economy along with moderate and sustained growth in the private sector. It is then assumed that demand for front-line services will also grow at a proportional rate.

The 2000 Census reported the population to be 67,890. This represented a 29% increase in population over the previous ten years. This growth is anticipated to continue by two to three percent per year over the next five years to an estimated population of between 78,000 and 82,200 by 2007.

Indicators of growth include population, building activity, rate of unemployment, franchise fee income, and ad valorem and sales tax revenues. The City of College Station has not experienced the same level of economic downturn faced by other areas in Texas and the nation due to the insulating nature of Texas A&M University on the local economy.

- Commercial, single family and multi family residential construction continue to be strong, although a gradual decline is anticipated over the next five years.
- Brazos County has maintained an unemployment rate of less than four percent since 1990. The local economy has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state and the nation. Local employment is expected to remain relatively strong.
- The City has experienced a 129% increase in the tax base since 1992 and a 9.4% increase in the last year with 5.72% being due to new development and 3.68% due to revaluation. This growth pattern is expected to continue although at a tempered pace.
- The sales tax is the largest single revenue source for the City's General Fund, accounting for approximately 42% of General Fund revenues. Although sales taxes have gradually increased in College Station over the past two years many Texas cities have faced a significant decline in these revenues. Sales tax revenue is presently being monitored and has recently dropped slightly.
- Utility revenues continue to increase from year to year and are expected to maintain that pattern. Changes in revenues have been affected by purchased power costs, rate changes, and weather conditions.

- Franchise fee revenue is expected to continue to gradually decline due to FCC regulations, fewer land telephone lines being utilized, as well as the increased popularity of satellite television.

Economic and fiscal indicators demonstrate that the local economy has shown moderate and sustained growth. This growth has tempered in the past two years, directly impacting the City's ability to provide services, although revenue growth continues to appear to be equal to the costs of maintaining current service levels. There is however concern that this margin will decline. OB&SP staff continues to monitor various indicators of economic and fiscal health of the community.

The Fire Department is grouped in Council Vision Statement 1: Core Services. This Vision Statement reads: "We will provide high quality, customer focused, basic city services at a reasonable cost."

Over the next five years the Fire Department will continue to strive toward implementation of the ***Fire Protection Master Plan*** presented to Council on April 27, 2000.

III. SWOT Analysis

The following is an analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats apparent to the Fire Department.

Strengths

- ✓ City Council's renewed emphasis on Core Services.
- ✓ Public perception of, and satisfaction with, the Fire Department.
- ✓ Quality personnel.
- ✓ Community growth.
- ✓ High quality facilities and equipment.
- ✓ Comprehensive ***Fire Protection Master Plan***.

Weaknesses

- ✓ Number of personnel
 - Number of suppression personnel mandated by the Texas Commission on Fire Protection for interior structure firefighting.
 - Number of personnel needed to meet the demand for inspection and public education services.
 - Number of personnel needed to adequately provide premise code enforcement for a city of our physical size.
 - Number of support staff personnel for fire/EMS training, fire prevention, public education, quartermaster, and code enforcement.
- ✓ Number and location of facilities.
- ✓ Lack of equipment and staffing, especially the lack of a dedicated ladder company.
- ✓ Lack of positive revenue streams.

- ✓ TAMU presence- 30% of Fire Department primary response area is owned by TAMU and is tax exempt.
- ✓ Lack of reliable mechanism for funding the ***Fire Protection Master Plan***.

Opportunities

- ✓ Community growth.
- ✓ Citizen involvement through the Citizens' Fire Academy and the Citizens' Assistance Response Team (CART).
- ✓ Citizen support as exhibited by the City Survey results.
- ✓ Emerging technology.
- ✓ Theoretical increase in alternative funding sources.
- ✓ City Council's renewed emphasis on Core Services.

Threats

- ✓ Community growth.
- ✓ Unfunded mandates.
- ✓ Increased demand for services.
- ✓ Added and reemphasized responsibilities, such as WMD response and Domestic Preparedness.
- ✓ Citizen expectations compared to department capabilities.
- ✓ Increasing TAMU presence within commercial areas of the city.
- ✓ Shifts in strategic priorities.

IV. Strategies for Addressing SWOT Analysis

The following are key strategies that will be used to address the challenges faced by each division within the Fire Department.

Emergency Operations

The Fire Department Master Planning Team is committed to better planning in the determination of the future fire and EMS facilities consistent with the needs of an adequate public facilities plan. The ***Fire Protection Master Plan*** recommends the following as the primary goal for the placement of future fire stations:

*Achieve a five (5) minute response² time to
90% of the Population of the City of College Station.*

We are not so ingenuous as to expect to be capable of delivering emergency services to all areas inside our city limits within this timeframe. However, we do aspire to, and are dedicated to, the delivery of emergency assistance to the vast majority of our citizens in a manner that will have positive results.

Even with the improved response coverage due to construction of Station 5, approximately 50% of the area inside the city limits will be located outside the 5-minute

² 30 second call processing time, 1-minute turn-out time, and 3-½ minute drive (response) time.

response time for engine companies, due to annexation. This 50% area coverage does represent approximately 75% of the city's population.

We can, however, provide coverage to 90% or more of our current resident population with resources responding from seven or eight locations and an “adequate” response time of 6 minutes: 1 minute for call processing³; 1 minute for personnel turn-out; 4 minute drive time⁴.

To properly plan for the funding, site acquisition, architectural and engineering design, construction, apparatus purchase and personnel selection for implementation of an adequate public facilities plan, the Fire Department reaffirms the following recommendation for a 5-year plan:

1. Two additional stations to serve established areas that are outside acceptable response criteria.
2. Relocation of Station 3 to a site west of its current location to better serve projected growth areas. The circumstance of the access roads of Highway 6 South becoming one-way will greatly hamper response from Station 3 at its current location.

Construction of any new or relocated stations must be addressed in the next Capital Improvement Project bond election. Additional required personnel will be addressed through the normal budget process.

Following is the first 5 years of the implementation timeline for these recommendations.

FY '03	Design and engineering for Station 5 Construction of Station 5 Apparatus for Station 5 3 personnel; 2 nd year staffing for Station 5
FY '04	Site acquisition and design for Station 3 4 personnel; 3 rd year staffing for Station 5 1 position; part-time Pub. Ed. Asst.
FY '05	Construction of Station 3 6 personnel; 1 st year staffing for ladder company 1 position; Deputy Fire Marshal
FY '06	Site acquisition and design for Station 6 Apparatus for ladder company Relocate Emergency Operations Center 6 personnel; 2 nd year staffing for ladder company
FY '07	Construction of Station 6 6 personnel; 1 st year staffing for Station 6

³ Current performance measure goal for the dispatch of calls is 96% dispatched within 1 minute. Figures for the first three-quarters of FY '02 show performance at 99%.

⁴ 4-minute drive time corresponds to an average 2 mile driving distance.

Fire Marshal's Office

Fire Prevention

With the steadily increasing workload within the Fire Prevention Division and supervision responsibilities for the Code Enforcement and Parking Enforcement divisions, the Fire Marshal anticipates the need for a Deputy Fire Marshal position for FY '06 and an additional Fire Prevention Officer in FY '08.

Public Education

Demand for fire and life safety and injury prevention classes has escalated to a point that it has overcome the resources of a single Public Education Officer. A part-time Public Education Assistant will be requested in the FY '04 budget process, with the need for a full-time position anticipated in FY '06.

Code Enforcement/Community Enhancement

In the two years since the ***Fire Protection Master Plan*** was approved, the number of Community Enhancement/Code Enforcement cases handled has increased by sixty percent (60%), from 7,352 cases in FY '99 to 12,077 cases in FY '01. The Council has reemphasized the importance of this function as a priority.

With the approval for FY '03 of an additional Code Enforcement Officer position, funded with Community Development Block Grant funds, staffing should be sufficient for a city our physical size.

The enforcement processes employed to ensure code compliance will be evaluated to ensure that hazards and other violations are corrected as quickly, and correctly, as possible.

Emergency Management

While we continue to improve EOC capability and functionality, the space constraint is one that cannot be overcome. The current location is small and imposes challenges that could impact disaster response. There is inadequate physical space for the required responding personnel, wall space is limited and there are no overflow or breakout spaces for the various ICS groups-Finance, Planning, Operations, Logistics, and Policy.

Little can be done to overcome the space limitation issue. Additionally, the current location, with the direct outside entrance door, and the commonality with day-to-day fire department functions, detracts from the need for, and desirability of, strict security for the facility. It is far too easy for non-essential personnel and undesired personnel, such as media representatives, to gain access to the EOC.

It is recommended that for FY '06 a dedicated space should be identified whose primary planning use is to be an EOC. It could realistically function as a training room and/or meeting facility, but its design should be based on the EOC coordination and control tasks, with functionality, documentation, information flow, communications, security, displays, and so forth, all being considered in the design.

V. Budgetary Impact

Although the recommendations that have been made by the Fire Department, and their proposed implementation schedule, may seem to be very aggressive, they are steps we feel are necessary to address our responsibilities to our community as they are at this point in time.

Capital expenses for the relocation of Station 3 and the addition of Station 6 must be addressed through the Capital Improvement Projects program. If the voters approve bonds there will be several years, perhaps three to five, to address staffing for Station 6 through the annual budget process. The majority of the recommended staffing expenses will be dictated by the outcome of any CIP bond election.

VI. Priorities and Recommendations

The following are key recommendations and priorities for the next five years.

1. The first priority of your Fire Department is to provide emergency response to the citizens of College Station and Texas A&M University property in a timely manner. Having an appropriate number of well-trained and equipped personnel strategically placed throughout our community will allow us to render assistance to those in need quickly and effectively.
2. An equally important priority is to provide the safest working environment possible for our personnel. This means providing the best personal protective equipment, apparatus and equipment, facilities, and training possible, within the bounds of sound fiscal judgement and practices.

VII. Resources

General fund resources are used to fund the operations of the Fire Department, with some minor exceptions:

1. A percentage of the Parking Operations budget is funded through the Parking Enterprise Fund.
2. Two Code Enforcement Officer positions are funded through Community Development Block Grant funds.
3. A small amount of revenue is generated through fees for services for ambulance transport and some required inspections and fire detection and suppression system testing performed by the Fire Prevention Division.

Additional sources of funding for local fire and emergency medical services are scarce. There are some federal grant programs to which we submit application, such as the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program and the Office of Justice Programs Domestic Preparedness Grant Program. Unfortunately, both these programs address the need of equipment and specialized training, but not the need for additional personnel.

As stated previously, thirty percent of the fire department's primary response area is owned by Texas A&M University and is tax exempt. Should the TAMU System be approached concerning contributing to the cost of providing service, even a small student

emergency services fee, such as ten dollars per student per semester, could generate in excess of one million dollars per year.

No additional positions are forecast to be added to Community Enhancement/Code Enforcement, Parking Operations and Enforcement, or Emergency Management over the next five years.

The following chart provides a five-year budget projection for the Fire Department. Personnel required to implement department recommendations are shown as phased programs to minimize budgetary impact.

BUDGET	EVENT	CAPITAL COST	RECURRING COSTS
FY '03	Design and engineering for Station 5	\$261,000.00	
	Construction of Station 5	\$1,129,000.00	\$46,000.00
	Apparatus w/ equipment for Station 5	\$500,000.00	\$24,500.00
	3 personnel; 2nd year staffing for Station 5		\$142,905.00
	Totals for FY '03	\$1,890,000.00	\$213,405.00
FY '04	Site acquisition and design for Station 3	\$500,000.00	
	4 personnel; 3rd year staffing for Station 5		\$190,540.00
	Part-time Public Education Assistant	\$17,000.00	\$28,000.00
	Training Program Technology	\$130,000.00	\$5,000.00
	Totals for FY '04	\$647,000.00	\$223,540.00
FY '05	Construction of Station 3	\$1,250,000.00	
	6 personnel; 1st year staffing of dedicated ladder company		\$285,810.00
	Department Quartermaster	\$25,000.00	\$35,000.00
	Totals for FY '05	\$1,275,000.00	\$320,810.00
FY '06	Site acquisition and design for Station 6	\$500,000.00	
	Apparatus for ladder company	\$950,000.00	\$52,000.00
	6 personnel; 2nd year staffing for dedicated ladder company		\$285,810.00
	Convert part-time Public Education Assistant to full-time		\$12,000.00
	Deputy Fire Marshal	\$25,000.00	\$64,800.00
	Totals for FY '06	\$1,475,000.00	\$414,610.00
FY '07	Construction of Station 6	\$1,250,000.00	\$46,000.00
	6 personnel; 1st year staffing for Station 6		\$285,810.00
	Apparatus w/equipment for Station 6	\$500,000.00	\$24,500.00

	Totals for FY '07	\$1,750,000.00	\$356,310.00
	Totals for 5 year timeline	\$7,037,000.00	\$1,528,675.00

A percentage of the cost for relocating Station 3 may be offset by proceeds from the sale of the current station site. As this is a relocation of an existing station, there would be no additional costs for operations staffing.

Because almost fifty percent of the response area for Station 6 is classified low-to-middle income, an equal percentage of the construction cost of Station 6 could come from Community Development Block Grants funds. Some very preliminary discussions have been held with the Bryan Fire Department concerning the possibility of a joint use facility to not only serve the northeast area of our city, but also some southern areas of the City of Bryan, most notably the East 29th Street corridor. This could have an adverse effect on CDBG participation in this project.

VIII. Performance Measure

The definitive measure of success for emergency response operations is the delivery of service to the citizens of our community in a manner that will allow us to have an immediate positive impact on an emergency situation. Therefore we will strive to reach our recommended response criteria of a six-minute total response time⁵ to 90% of our resident population. This is a realistic and reasonable goal if there is an appropriate number of well-trained and equipped personnel strategically placed throughout our community.

Operations under the Fire Marshal's Office will strive to meet the increasing demand for services. This will be measured under established division performance measures.

Implementation milestones for the next five years are illustrated in Section VI.

The Fire Department will provide the best possible service with the resources available over the next five-year period. As the community grows it will be necessary for the department to change and strive to meet the demands that growth will have on the City.

The *Fire Protection Master Plan* is reviewed annually and revised bi-annually. This Five Year Plan will be incorporated into the review process.

⁵ 1-minute call processing time, 1-minute turn-out time and a maximum 4-minute drive time.